

OFFICE OF CLIMATE CHANGE, SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCY
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

925 DILLINGHAM BOULEVARD, SUITE 257 • HONOLULU, HAWAII 96817
PHONE: (808) 768-2277 • EMAIL: resilientoahu@honolulu.gov • INTERNET: www.resilientoahu.org



KIRK CALDWELL
MAYOR

JOSHUA W. STANBRO
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR &
CHIEF RESILIENCE OFFICER

August 29, 2019

The Honorable Tommy Waters, Chair
and Members
Committee on Public Safety and Welfare
Honolulu City Council
530 South King Street, Room 202
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Waters and Councilmembers:

SUBJECT: Testimony Regarding Bill 40 (2019)

The Office of Climate Change, Sustainability and Resiliency (Resilience Office) strongly supports the intent of Bill 40, which strives to improve and build upon existing City Ordinance in order to protect the health and safety of O'ahu residents and further transition O'ahu away from single-use plastic goods. Furthermore, Bill 40 improves the definition of plastic bags and expands restrictions on single-use plastics, including polystyrene foam containers and plastic service ware.

Bill 40 currently references the mounting evidence that plastics are reaching critical levels in our oceans and entering our food and drinking water systems, creating conditions for significant adverse impacts on both human health and our natural environment. It's important to note that single-use plastics also clog our storm drains and waterways, such that when storms or heavy rains come to our island, the prospect for flooding is increased, increasing the risk to public safety and property. Removing single-use plastics from our waste stream will help to ensure that storm water can exit our water ways quickly—thereby decreasing the threat of flooding and reducing health hazards, clean-up and disaster response costs to citizens in the long run.

While the Resilience Office concurs with this assessment, we would recommend elaborating on Section 1 (Purpose and Findings) to describe public safety concerns inherent in single-use plastics use. Recent scientific reports indicate that significant amounts of microplastics are being ingested by humans through the food we eat and the water we drink. By continuing our mass use of plastics, we are poisoning ourselves, wildlife, and polluting our ocean and land.

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Plastic food ware products that are created from fossil-fuels produce greenhouse gas emissions and increase climate change impacts. The production of plastics directly create greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, a recent study from the University of Hawai'i indicates that as plastics degrade and break down into smaller pieces the release of harmful greenhouse gases actually accelerates. Even plastics that are responsibly captured and sent for waste processing at H-POWER or are shipped overseas for recycling release even more emissions in both processes.

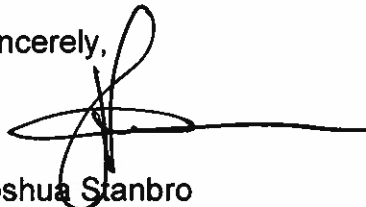
Additionally, as the 2018 report from the International Panel on Climate Change informs, if we fail to significantly reduce our greenhouse gas emissions in the next decade, global climate will reach a tipping point and unleash catastrophic storms, fires, heat waves, and lead to the potential collapse of our food chain and mass displacement of human populations. We are already seeing evidence of this imbalance both here in Hawai'i and around the world. Removing fossil-fuel based single-use plastics from daily use in the City and County of Honolulu will help us to avoid such a future.

In recognition of this, the Resilience Office further recommends that the definitions included in the bill be strengthened to avoid potential loopholes and to better identify that the single-use products targeted for elimination are fossil-fuel derived. The bill should also include provisions about how O'ahu's transition away from single-use plastics will comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

In summary, the Resilience Office strongly supports the passage of Bill 40 with certain amendments referenced above. We stand ready to work with the Honolulu City Council on any amendments that will improve the language of the bill to accomplish the stated objectives.


Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments in support of Bill 40. Should you have any questions, please contact me at resilientoahu@honolulu.gov or 768-2277.

Sincerely,



Joshua Stanbro
Executive Director and
Chief Resilience Officer

APPROVED:



Roy K. Amemiya Jr.
Managing Director